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HIGHLIGHTS:

- General discussion about the background of the Sechelt Indians.
 Clarence: When they first landed here at that time, when they were looking for a place to build their village, water is the first thing they looked for, water. They knew they had to have lots of water to supply their new village. So later on in the years after they got established here, of course they had spring water at the corner of the Bay, kept them going for a couple of years. Then they went up here four miles back and they had a shipment of lumber, of lumber from Vancouver that was delivered here by a scowload, and they packed it up to the Mission Creek, which empties to the point. That's Mission Creek where you notice the bridge across the point there. And they had water by flume. They built a flume and that's how they got their water, a flume about four miles back taken from Mission Creek and emptied on top the hill here. They had a reservoir of their own, they build a reservoir, and that's how they were supplied with water.
Of course a year or so later and a bad winter, a freshet came and destroyed the intake of their flume. And of course they were getting more smarter then and they knew there was such a thing as a pipe then. So they got pipes and they switched from Mission to what they call the spring water, the creek empties into Purves(?) Bay -- I just forget the name of the creek. They built a three-mile pipe, laid a three-mile pipe, I should say, taking it from this spring and empty into a big tank -- the tank is still up there for their water reservoir -- and it supplied every house with water, and the school. And supplied few of the non-Indians here, what we call the Whitaker days. In other words they were the first people to come here and have the license, the water license. And the result of that is we are now getting free water today, going back because we had the first license, you see.

Imbert: That's the water rights?

Clarence: The water rights, yes.

Imbert: And you were suppplying the Whitakers?

Clarence: That's right, we would supply the Whitakers.

Imbert: Of course they came a little bit before your time. Didn't they settle here, didn't the first Europeans settle over there? Or was it after you? Can you remember when they came there?

Clarence: You mean the Whitakers were here before the Indians?

Imbert: No, no. Before your time. Were they, or can you remember, you, yourself?

Clarence: I do not remember Whitaker. It was in my father's time when Whitaker landed here.

Imbert: His father came -- Whitaker's father came afterwards -- I mean to live here, didn't he?

Clarence: No, Bert Whitaker -- the first Whitaker, that's Bert Whitaker, that was the first Whitaker that landed here -- and he build a home on Purves(?) Bay just about two miles from the wharf on the left hand side going out. That's where the built the first home. Then later on in the years he rented a place on this end of the village, where my son is now, towards the wharf. He rented a place there from Jack Isidore -- he was then a chief, Jack Isidore. And he opened a little store there. The only people he was trading with at that time was the Indians, because they were the only people here. See, the Indians was established here for so many years before the first white man came, and Whitaker was one of the first ones that came here.

Imbert: So he was really on the Indian territory right there?
Clarence: That's right.

Imbert: Well then, after a while it developed, I suppose. The lots were made out there.

Clarence: That's right.

Imbert: The Whitakers owned that piece next door, didn't they?

Clarence: Yes. Of course we had a lot of trouble with that part of the land where he applied through England, to England. It was some lord, I just forgot the name -- I got in another document here. See originally, when the Indians came here in the, around 1860, I should say, when they first decided to build a community village, they picked from rock to rock. That is that point rock there where now the proposed breakwater is going to be, and this rock over there. So they went back, they knew that there was a Royal Comission surveyor coming to survey an Indian reservation. So the chief that stayed here, the other chiefs instruct him, "When these people come don't forget, we want rock to rock. That will be our bearing." Of course, in those days, they took it for granted it was still their land. And all of a sudden they found out that Whitaker had a hold of that chunk of land applying through England. And they kept crowded and crowded and finally in my time, "This is as far as you go. You're not going to come any further." And we had quite a powwow over that land, that boundary land there. And this is not the only reserve that had that kind of trouble. Many other reserves around Vancouver Island and up Kamloops had the same kind of trouble, because they were ignorant to the laws at that time, to the laws of the land.

Imbert: Yes. It was too vague and therefore they hadn't defined, it hadn't been defined in the way that they would know what was going on. Did it still, does it go to the point out here now?

Clarence: We still have that. We still have that. That's all leased out now over there to the non-Indian, to the point there where the proposed breakwater is going to be.

Chief Johnny was the chief that made history here, all we know him was Chief Johnny. He had a very little school in the mission. As you know, Mission is an old school, Indian school. So he had two or three training there at Mission, so when he was discharged from the Mission school they appointed him chief. In fact, looking at his grave there, at his monument there, he was thirty-two years old when he died. But they say he was a very intelligent person, a man. And he led this tribe. In other words, my dad used to say, he was a chief that made us progress, advance like the white man, compete with the white man. And he organized the brass band as you see there -- he was taught music in school. He organized his village and he's the one that taxed them to build the school,
the school. They were debating at their meetings how they were going to build a school. So it was Chief Johnny, the first one that spoke. "I have a suggestion here, how we're going to build a school. We're loggers, we have lots of timber. Whitaker is here -- let us give him the contract to build a school and we'll pay Whitaker by logs." And that's, they all agreed on that, and they build a school. And the people start clearing the land here, digging stumps and that's where they started building a school. So this little Chief Johnny was a very outstanding chief as to advancement of this tribe, to become competitive with the non-Indian.

Imbert: What years would that be?

Clarence: That was in the time of, you might say, in 19--,
this church was built in 1907 and the school was built in 1902. He was chief then, the early 1900s up to the... I just forget what year he died, I don't remember him myself.

Imbert: He died a young man.

Clarence: Thirty-two when he died.

Imbert: That's amazing, to be a chief at that age.

Clarence: At that age to be a leader of... At that time there was 600 here then. But they supported him, they supported him as a young leader. In a white man's way, you might say, he organized... My dad used to say, "You people now call it a club, a club. We didn't know what a club meant in those days," he says, "but we were well-organized. We had money available for what you people now club. We paid our band leader from Vancouver, Charlie Rainey(?) thousands and thousands of dollars to keep him here. We bought our instruments. Our instruments came from England, our trombones, our baritones, our coronets -- all our intruments came from England. We had forty pieces and we had money, we must..."

Imbert: This was a famous band, wasn't it?

Clarence: Yes, they took, they took the prize in the band contest in New Westminster I think in 1903, in 1903. And they had uniforms. Well, they were not short of anything. And the tribe sponsored it, they sponsored it, the old people sponsored it. There was no assistance from the Indian Department or from the church or from anybody. They sponsored themselves. My dad was one of them that played for the late King George, who was then a Duke of York, I believe, in C.P.R. dock when he came here on the Empress of China. I got the clipping of the paper here. My dad was one of them. He was right at the... The band was right at the end of the gang plank and the city band was right outside the gate at the end of float, I mean end of the dock. The Squamish band was there. He says, "We marched right up to the hotel of Vancouver." And that's on record at the Archives.
Imbert: Carrying on with this logging business, was that done as the tribe as a whole, was it a sort of tribal... or was it done by certain individuals working for the tribe? How did this...? Was this a sort of communal business?

Clarence: They had each, each... They had camps, they had so many different camps. And that the little passenger boat, like the old Comox, used to go and stop in every camp. There was all Indian camps, about three, four, five, six families scattered all over the Inlet here. They were not all grouped together. They obtained their license from the Crown, I suppose, at that time. And the license at that time you could choose your own claim. But once you got your license, same as now the fishing license, when you get your fishing license commercially you got up to where the fish is.

Imbert: They would log on any land? It wouldn't have to be reserve land?

Clarence: No. Any land.

Imbert: And then how were the profits of this divided? I mean, how did they...

Clarence: They divided it equally amongst themselves. Supposing now there's four of them, well, it's divided by the four of them. And their groceries were shipped from Vancouver before Whitaker came here, shipped from, like from, I think Grossman was their grocery store. And Brown, I think, was the clothing if I remember right. They keep mentioning these old time trading stores in Vancouver. Of course the old (name) where they got their boom chains and where their logs were shipped to by the old tugs. And by the time the tug reached the mouth of the Inlet they had about forty, fifty sections of boom of logs.

Imbert: So each one of these sort of groups, or settlements, they got the profits, so to speak, and divided it up amongst themselves. And then they paid this tax to the central of the band, so to speak.

Clarence: Yes. They paid out of their earnings. Supposing I came down... Of course $100, $200 in those days, I guess, was an exceptional big sum of money for a season. And of course, they tell me, they had gold pieces in those days, gold pieces. And there was a bylaw passed by the chief, Chief Johnny at that time, that every male individual, able-bodied man shall pay $100 towards the building of the school, to open, to start the building. And the women were taxed $50 and that was their start. And if anyone that felt, that was wealthy enough to spare another $100, that was done. They did not ask them but there was several of them, under the documents I got from the missionaries. I got the documents showing how much each individual paid towards the building of the school and the church. I dug in that deep to get that from the church. And it showed certain family -- my grandfather was one of the
progressive families -- my grandfather, he put an extra $100. When they called for the tax, open the tax in the hall, says, "Here's an extra $100 from me and my sons." And there was several of them that done that.

Imbert: When the school, even before that was established, was there much forbidding of speaking the language, the Indian language? Was it forbidden to be talked about this sort of thing? This is what happened over at George (name)'s school. And they were punished very severely if they were caught speaking the Indian language. There was an attempt really to sort of wipe out everything of the background and the culture and so on.

Clarence: We were restricted to a certain degree to use our dialect. Going into school at my time, and the peoples before me, it was quite difficult to go up there and try and speak English, because, of course, these teachers at that time, these nuns came from France. They were shipped from France, came through the Panama. And they were here and a lot of them, you might say, had a very strong French accent. They couldn't hardly speak English themselves. Then you can see the difficulties we had with... them with us and us with them. And of course they were very learned teacher. I will say that much, particularly my teacher. She was highly regarded as a good teacher in France. You might say if she was teacher here today you'd say she'd be teaching university. Because a lot of things that I know now about the moon and the stars and how the world revolved, things like that, she used to try and teach us. But we were restricted with our dialect. We were not too much restricted, maybe, like some other schools, but we were certainly restricted to some degree.

Imbert: You wouldn't be punished if you were heard talking?

Clarence: No. But we were checked to try and speak English, which was more beneficial. But we were not too much severely, I wouldn't say punished.

Imbert: Well, that's another thing, the punishment.

Clarence: Yes.

Imbert: Before that, how... Was there a time when all the old things would be got rid of? Were there totem poles here originally, for instance, in Sechelt or the other villages? Was there a time when all this was...

Clarence: Yes.

Imbert: ... kicked out? When would that be?

Clarence: There's a good question. People are wondering how come we don't take part in Indian potlatches, and Indian dancing and what not, as you see like in several reserves, like Duncan or Squamish. Sechelt they claim, according to the
church, were so much attached to the church, to the new religion they had adopted and the church preaching to them about God, they done away with their own beliefs. They done away with their old Indian songs, they done away with their own Indian dancing and they done away with everything. They set their mind strictly to one thing and that was their church. And that's where it came from, as early as 1868.

Imbert: So there was no real conflict like developed in the way it was in other places?

Clarence: No.

Imbert: The new and the old were side by side and it was not a problem.

Clarence: Yes. I wouldn't say the church made, forced them to do it. There were certain appointed chiefs, what they call chiefs of the church, according to the documents of the church. They appointed so and so, "Well, you'll be the leader of the church. When you're up in the camps, up in your immediate villages, up in Jervis Inlet, you're going to be the leader of the church while I'm gone." And this was handed down by the missionaries. And I've seen it myself when I'm home from school during the summer. Every Sunday they'd have a gathering, and this certain person that's appointed by the church would carry on the church.

Imbert: And of course the priest would only get here occasionally then.

Clarence: Very occasionally, yes. ... which I forgot this part of the church. The last tribal gathering they had in the... This must have been around, we'll say now, around the early part of 1850, because the first missionaries came here, the Oblates, in 1858, according to their books. The last one they had at Pender Harbor was about that time. They were not shooting their games with bows and arrows, they were using guns. And they had a very large gathering at Pender Harbor at this, (Indian) is the word, is the name of the place, I knew it was going to come back to me sooner or later, (Indian). They had made it an exceptional more up to date tribal gathering. Instead of buring wood they were burning oil, oil from the seal and porpoise and maybe dogfish oil. And naturally when they have a gathering like that, tribal gathering, they have fire. If you go to any tribal dances nowadays anywhere on the island... Here on the mainland they have fire as you might have seen, if you happen to visit them and their tribal dances. Fire was always something to have. And they use oil at that time.

And I've seen a lady, I've seen the lady myself, that was shot accidentally through the palm of her hand when they were going out at nighttime spearing and shooting these porpoises and seals. And they say -- my grandfather was telling me -- when
they were preparing themselves for that big gathering in (Indian) in Pender Harbor, in nighttime he was appointed to be steering the war canoe. And then he'd fall asleep and lose his paddle. So his uncle came over to the stern of the boat and tied the paddle to his hand, because he was losing too many paddles in the nighttime, see. His uncle would be in the bow there chasing these seals and spearing these porpoises and sometimes he'd fall asleep and the boat would go this way and that way, zigzagging. Look in the stern and he'd be sleeping. So this lady that had an accident with his hand they, they were in another war canoe. The man in the bow of the canoe asked for the gun and she grabbed the gun this way and the gun went off and shot her through -- I seen the lady myself. So it's not very long ago they had this last big gathering here in Pender Harbor. And they knew this was going to be their last one, "After that we're going to become Catholics. We're going to do away with all our traditions and our tribal gatherings."

Imbert: A sort of farewell gathering.
Clarence: Sort of farewell gathering.
Imbert: Farewell to the past.
Clarence: Farewell to the past, yeah. And that's how come they done away with their tribal dances. And of course, nowadays, we have some boys that are still coming back to the totem poles, carving totem poles. We still have women that's weaving baskets.

Imbert: Yes. I suppose originally there were totem poles but that a long time ago.

Clarence: Yes. They had... I might add some of the tribal wars they had, small tribal wars where they had been attacked. We were told by people that came here that we were quite musical, song was something that was in us, song. So up at the head of Jervis Inlet the Hunaechin people, they heard that they were going to be attacked by a different, a tribe. So they made preparations and surely enough they were attacked by a certain tribe from the island. That's where I'm logging now, up there, right up the head, the Skwawka River. There's two rivers meeting up behind their immediate reserve and women all went up there and hide in, and sure enough the people that invaded them landed there at nighttime and they got wiped out. They got wiped out, these people that were invading got wiped out, and they left one man there, one warrior. So daylight came, this one man... They purposely left him to go home and tell them people where he came from to send more. And he was bailing out and was nothing but blood from the canoe. So they all sat down and beat their tom-toms and they started singing a song. And included in that sang, the wording of that song, was the man they saw there bailing out nothing but blood. And these are the stories I've handed out to certain people.

Anything we do, we compose a song right there. Like the great
hunter at Morrison Bluff, known to be a great hunter. He never used a bow and arrow. He was a man that would climb the mountain, a very brave person in mountain climbing, exceptionally to the other braves. He would use a pole to pull the mountain goats down to the bluff. Certain times of the year these mountain goats... Even today, the mountain goats come right down to that area. It's still there, the little tree is still there where he had corralled all the mountain goats. And his wife was waiting for him in the water, looking at her husband. Now every time I go by there, even today, I keep looking at it. And he had all these goats thrown down at the bluff with his pole, and the little goat, the youngest one, happened to jump between him and the bluff, throwing off the bluff, throwing him off balance and landing down to his death in the bottom. And while he was throwing these goats down the bottom his wife was beating the canoe, singing, praising her husband being a great hunter. She was singing a tune for her husband being a great hunter, known to be one of the greatest hunters amongst the Sechelt Nation. But when she saw her husband come down she stopped for a moment, she wept and cried there for a moment, and when she come to herself she changed her tune, she changed her tune. She started to beat a different tune of her husband's death. And it's how we are at that time. We were quick in composing a song, you might say, in anything we see.

Imbert: Are any of these songs still remembered?

Clarence: Some of them are still... We hardly remember... I could remember some of them very vague.

Imbert: Can you remember that one?

Clarence: Not too much of that one, not too much.

Imbert: The other one, about the warrior...

Clarence: Well, we have one or two here that are originally from up there. I used to sit in front of the church and every once in a while these old people would come out with that song and I'm sitting there listening. Too bad we didn't have a recorder at that time when they were telling the stories and they'd come out with the songs as well.

Imbert: Is there anybody here today that knows any of...?

Clarence: Well, I wouldn't say that they know that song completely. They might know a few tunes and a few words of it.

Imbert: Nobody knows any other songs?

Clarence: No. Not too much.

Imbert: Just a memory.

Clarence: That's right, just a memory. That's right. I used
to remember my grandfather humming a tune, singing away, humming a tune. Hunting songs, or war songs, they all had different songs, you know.

Imbert: And they had personal songs, too.

Clarence: Personal songs, yes.

Imbert: Like the song of the hunter on the cliff. Is it at (inaudible) Morrison Bluff?

Clarence: You know, you've been to Jervis, (inaudible) have you?

Imbert: I haven't been up it, no.

Clarence: Well, it's just the bluff immediately past Vancouver Bay. Just past Vancouver Bay, half way up the Inlet, you might say.

Imbert: That's where there Vancouver River comes in.

Clarence: Vancouver Bay they call it. (Break in Tape) ... of the writings on the rocks.

Imbert: Tell me about those.

Clarence: The writings of the rock, you could still see them just as plain as the day they were printed on by the Indians, you might say, centuries and centuries ago, of Indian paint. Today if you go up Jervis Inlet, if it's pointed out to you, you could swear that they were painted there yesterday.

Imbert: What do they show?

Clarence: Well, they show many, many different signs that... In fact I had pictures of it here but I turned them over to Les Peterson. But we had big plans this summer. I was interpreter for my late dad in our travels here but unfortunately he took sick suddenly and he died, which our trip was never was going to be fulfilled. We used to go up there and we'd camp and stay for days. And we'd point out these things to Les Peterson and show him and he'd take pictures of it and a story of the Jervis Inlet and where the Indians had travelled from the Interior. That is the Douglas area, where they had walked through them mountains, through them valleys into the Hunaechin Reserve and where certain families had stayed there during the summer.

Imbert: Did your dad know the interpretation of these signs that were on the rocks?

Clarence: Some of them. Some been there, you might say, for four or five hundred years, the story goes back.

Imbert: What are they painted with?
Clarence: They're painted with, well, we call it (Indian) in our dialect, (Indian). We go into a certain place where they go and get this paint. There are some up the head of Jarvis Inlet and some in Deserted Bay, way up in the valley. And they sort of come out of a rock and it's sort of... You'd grab a big long pole and you'd poke it into the earth and it's all sort of reddish color.

Imbert: What would you fix it on with?

Clarence: Well, I've never seen it prepared, but I think they prepare it with some water and I don't know what else, liquid they mix it with. And that was their paint.

Imbert: They wouldn't use an oil with, would they?

Clarence: I don't know if they did use oil. They had a lot of oil in those days. Seal oil was their oil.

Imbert: Did the Sechelt people take to fishing at all, like commercial fishing?

Clarence: The Sechelt people were great commercial fishermen. My dad was one of the outstanding fishing captains for the B.C. Packers for thirty-eight years. And I became a captain when I was eighteen years old, also for the B.C. Packers. And my dad was so outstanding, what I mean to say outstanding, was he never caused any mishap with the boats. He didn't cost the company any damages for the boats. He's never been to school but he navigated this coast just like anybody that had a full training in navigation. And he was invited into banquets and launching of boats by the company, and he was a great friend.

In fact, when he died the company send, you know, cards and representative for his funeral here last April.

Imbert: So there was as much fishing as there was logging, really, it was the same?

Clarence: Yes. The summer the fishing. They took to fishing during the First World War. That's when they become more or less involved in the fishing industry. And during the First World War there was a cannery then opened in Nelson Island, in Queen's Bay they call it. And there's where my dad was picked as one of the outstanding Indian, as a trusted man to run these big boats. Companies from (name), across the border came and bought fish. And from then on my dad was, you might say, appointed to run a boat, and finally in 1926 he, 1925, he travelled the coast then right to the Alaska border and the Charlottes and the west coast.

Imbert: (inaudible).

Clarence: We had people like, (Indian) will say -- you people call him Chief (Indian) -- would hire hunters preparing themself for these big Indian gatherings in (name). There were several of them like that, highly regarded. You might say
something similar to the Royal Family. And hire hunters to go up the mountain, spend many, many days and weeks up the mountains fetching down his game, and these mountain goat pelts, skins, to make Indian blankets.

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